REMARKS

This application has been reviewed in light of the Office Action dated June 30, 2005. Claims 1, 3-8, 14-16, and 18 are presented for examination. Claim 2 has been canceled, without prejudice or disclaimer of subject matter. Claims 1, 3-8, and 14-16 have been amended to define more clearly what Applicants regard as their invention. Claim 18 has been added to provide Applicants with a more complete scope of protection. Claims 1, 6, 14, and 18 are independent.

At paragraph 2 of the Office Action, the Examiner again requests Applicants to submit an English translation of the foreign priority document "for verification, in order to benefit the effective date as 06/22/2000." M.P.E.P. § 201.14(b) requires only a claim for priority and a certified copy of the foreign application be filed with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office to perfect priority. There is no requirement to file an English translation of the foreign priority document. 35 U.S.C. § 119(b)(2) merely states that the Director may require a certified copy of the original foreign application, specification, and drawings upon which it is based, a translation if not in the English language, and such other information as the Director considers necessary. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request acknowledgment that the claim for foreign priority has been perfected.

Claims 1, 6, and 14 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. The claims have been carefully reviewed and amended as deemed necessary to ensure that they conform fully to the requirements of Section 112, second paragraph, with special attention to the points raised in paragraph 5 of the Office Action. It

is believed that the rejection under Section 112, second paragraph, has been obviated, and its withdrawal is therefore respectfully requested.

Claims 1-8 and 14-16 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being obvious from U.S. Patent Application Publication No. US 2002/0161590A1 (Sakakibara) in view of U.S. Patent 5,999,208 (McNerney), U.S. Patent 6,370,279 (Paik), and U.S. Patent 6,064,772 (Tanno).

Claim 1 is directed to an image distribution system in a virtual space system composed of terminal apparatuses respectively provided at plural users and a server apparatus connected to the terminal apparatuses through a communication channel for constructing a virtual space for distributing an image among the terminal apparatuses. Each terminal apparatus comprises display means, image obtaining means, image compression means, determining means, control means, and transmission means.

The display means displays one of a first virtual area to show a condition of each of the plural users with images and text and a second virtual area to have a conference in a screen in response to designation by each of the plural users. The image obtaining means obtains the images of the plural users, and the image compression means compresses the image data with a quantization coefficient. The determining means determines whether each of images of the plural users obtained by the image obtaining means is arranged in the first virtual area or in the second virtual area. The control means controls the image compression means to make compressed image data by compressing data of the images of the plural users with a first quantization coefficient in case that each of the images of the plural users obtained by the obtaining means is arranged in the first virtual area or by compressing data of the images of plural users with a second quantization

coefficient smaller than the first quantization coefficient in case that the images of the plural users obtained by the obtaining means is arranged in the second virtual area. The transmission means transmits the compressed image data of the image of the user to the server apparatus.

Among other notable features of the system of Claim 1 are determining whether an image of a user is arranged in a first virtual area (e.g., an office room view) or in a second virtual area (e.g., a conference room view) in a screen in response to the user's designation. Furthermore, the system of Claim 1 makes compressed image data by compressing data of the images of plural users with a first quantization coefficient in case that each of the images of the plural users obtained in the obtaining the images of the plural users is arranged in the first virtual area or by compressing data of the images of plural users with a second quantization coefficient smaller than the first quantization coefficient in case that the images of the plural users obtained in the obtaining the images of the plural users is arranged in the second virtual area. By the virtue of the features of Claim 1, the amount of data can be decreased in the case that an image of a user is arranged in a first virtual area (e.g., an office room), while detail data can be provided in the case that an image of a user is arranged in a second virtual area (e.g., a conference room), to discriminate the motion of a user (e.g., movement of a user's mouth) more so than in the case of a first virtual area.[1]

Sakakibara relates to providing a distributed office system and a method of

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[1]/It is of course to be understood that claims are not limited by the details of the examples provided herein.

managing the system, in which a plurality of user terminal devices installed in different places, and usually one host server device are connected via a communication network.

McNerney, as understood by Applicants, relates to a system for implementing multiple simultaneous meetings in a virtual reality mixed media meeting room.

Paik, as understood by Applicants, relates to a block-based image processing method and apparatus therefor, in which blocking artifacts caused by a block-based image processing can apparently be removed using spatial adaptive filtering based on image restoration theory.

Tanno relates to an image reproducing apparatus having a detection circuit for detecting a component difference between groups of encoded image data, a decode circuit for decoding the image data, a regulation circuit for regulating a component of the image data, and a control circuit for controlling the regulation circuit on the basis of a result of detection made by the detection circuit.

In stark contrast to the features of Claim 1, nothing in Sakakibara, McNerney, Paik, or Tanno, whether considered either separately or in any permissible combination (if any), would teach or suggest determining whether an image of a user is arranged in a first virtual area or in a second virtual area in a screen in response to the user's designation. Furthermore, nothing in Sakakibara, McNerney, Paik, or Tanno, whether considered either separately or in any permissible combination (if any), would teach or suggest making compressed image data by compressing data of the images of plural users with a first quantization coefficient in case that each of the images of the plural users obtained in the obtaining the images of the plural users is arranged in the first virtual

area or by compressing data of the images of plural users with a second quantization coefficient smaller than the first quantization coefficient in case that the images of the plural users obtained in the obtaining the image of the user is arranged in the second virtual area, as recited in Claim 1.

Accordingly, Claim 1 is believed to be patentable over Sakakibara, McNerney, Paik, and Tanno, whether considered either separately or in any permissible combination (if any).

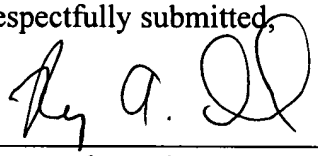
Independent Claims 6, 14, and 18 each recite certain features which are similar in many relevant respects to those discussed above with respect to Claim 1 and therefore are also believed to be patentable over Sakakibara, McNerney, Paik, or Tanno for the reasons discussed above.

The other claims in this application are each dependent from one or another of the independent claims discussed above and are therefore believed patentable for the same reasons. Since each dependent claim is also deemed to define an additional aspect of the invention, however, the individual reconsideration of the patentability of each on its own merits is respectfully requested.

In view of the foregoing remarks, Applicant respectfully requests favorable reconsideration and early passage to issue of the present application.

Applicant's undersigned attorney may be reached in our New York Office by telephone at (212) 218-2100. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our address listed below.

Respectfully submitted,



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